

Managing Operational Transitions: A Key to Maintaining the Initiative

**A Monograph
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Abstract

MANAGING OPERATIONAL TRANSITIONS: A KEY TO MAINTAINING THE INITIATIVE by MAJ David W. Hardy, U.S. Army, 46 pages.

Effective operational transitions are crucial for success, but recent interventions indicate that U.S. forces, and the Army in particular, struggle with planning and executing the transition to post-combat operations. By developing and applying a general model for transitions, this study shows that many of the problems associated with post-combat transitions originate from a failure to apply some basic concepts concerning transitions.

This monograph develops a general model for transitions using Organizational Development concepts that consists of four inter-related aspects. First, organizations must have a clear and accurate picture of the present (pre-change) state. Second, organizations must have a clear understanding of the desired future (post-change) state. Three, organizations must understand and be able to identify the conditions indicating the need to transition. And four, organizations must develop a plan for managing the transition state. This general model for transitions highlights the similarities between all types of transitions, and underscores the idea that all effective transitions, regardless of when they occur in a campaign, follow the same general principles. Difficulties in post-combat transitions often result from a failure to follow these ideas.

Two historical case studies, Operation DESERT STORM and Operation JUST CAUSE/PROMOTE LIBERTY, explore different aspects of transitions. The conclusion is that effective transitions result from having the right capability in the right place at the right time to immediately dominate the situation. The historical case studies illustrate the important role of doctrine, and indicate that U.S. forces will continue to have difficulty transitioning to post-combat operations as long as there is a lack of valid post-combat doctrine to guide planning. It offers several principles to guide planning and execution. First, commanders must adequately resource the planning and preparation efforts for the post-change state in order to facilitate an effective transition. Second, the post-change state planning must be thoroughly integrated with pre-change state planning. Third, the appropriate forces for the post-change phase, in terms of capabilities and size, must be in place to immediately begin operations in order to reduce the time and impact of the transition period.

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CHAPTER 1: WHY ALL THIS TALK ABOUT TRANSITIONS?

Military forces ... must beware of the transitions in war that can sap operational momentum...negotiating those transitions is the key to warfighting... General Eric Shinseki¹

U.S. Army Field Manual 3-0 (FM 3-0), *Operations* defines a transition as the interval “between the ongoing operation and full execution of branches and sequels” and often includes “the change from one dominant type of operations, such as offense, to another such as stability.”² FM 3-0 goes on to state that poorly planned and executed transitions, “reduce the tempo of the operation, slow its momentum, and cede the initiative to the adversary.”³

Although U.S. Army doctrine clearly states the importance of transitions, recent experience in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM in 2003 indicates that the Army struggles with planning and executing the transition to post-combat operations.⁴ The transition to post-combat operations plagued an otherwise very effective military campaign, and gave the appearance that the Army did not adequately plan or prepare for the post-hostilities phase. This poor transition reduced U.S. strategic momentum, invited considerable international scrutiny, and sparked tremendous debate in U.S. military circles. In addition, this intervention showed that a quick victory on the battlefield does not automatically translate into immediate strategic victory.⁵

Why does the Army seem to struggle with the transition to post-combat operations? By developing and applying a general model for transitions, this study indicates that many of the

¹ General Eric Shinseki, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, testimony before the Airland Sub-committee, Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, March 8, 2000. Internet, <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2000/000308es.pdf>.

² U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, 6-20. This definition distinguishes the context for this discussion vis-à-vis the two ways very commonly used – the post-combat “Transition” phase commonly mentioned in U.S. joint doctrine, or force transformation in the sense of transitioning to a new force structure. JP 5-00.1, Joint Campaign Planning, lists “Transition” as a phase (Figure II-4) in a campaign that contains elements such as conflict termination, establishing civilian rule, and redeployment. CJCSM 3500.05, Tasks 501-00-J5 and 502-00-J3, relate to preparing for and conducting transitions to follow on forces and redeployment.

³ FM 3-0, 6-5.

⁴ Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Lessons of the Iraq War: Executive Summary*, 21 July 2003. Internet, http://www.csis.org/features/iraq_instantlessons_exec.pdf

problems associated with post-combat transitions originate from a failure to apply some basic concepts concerning transitions. As Richard Beckhard and Reuben Harris from the Alfred Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology point out in their book, *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change*,

The traditional approach to change would be to define a plan detailing how people and departments will behave and be organized when the change is complete. What is often not adequately recognized is that such a change will involve a significant period of time – a period that is significantly different from the prechange state (present) and the postchange state (future)...The transition period is a dynamic yet unique state of affairs, one that requires significant management attention and planning.⁶

This study explores this “dynamic yet unique state of affairs” by developing a conceptual model for transitions based on the work of Beckhard and Harris, then applying this model in two historical case studies. The result is not only an improved theoretical approach to transitions, but also a greater understanding of some of the practical aspects of planning and executing transitions.

This study offers a framework to analyze transitions, and shows that the problems associated with post-combat transitions, while certainly difficult, are possible to overcome. It shows that despite the unique circumstances surrounding each transition in a campaign, all successful transitions follow some general ideas that contribute to the effectiveness of the transition. It clearly shows that organizations must not consider transitions in isolation since the problems associated with the actual transition period are often the result of the interaction of various factors surrounding the transition period. Finally, it reinforces the idea that effective

⁵ Frederick Kagan, *War and Aftermath*, in Policy Review, Internet, http://www.policyreview.org/aug03/kagan_print.html, last accessed September 9, 2003.

⁶ Richard Beckhard and Reuben Harris, *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change*, 5. Richard Beckhard served as an Adjunct Professor of Organization Behavior at the Alfred P. Sloan School of Management at MIT. He also served as the executive director of his own consulting firm. Dr. Reuben Harris served as an assistant professor in the Organization Studies Department at MIT. This book is one of several in the Addison-Wesley series relating to the field of Organizational Development. Organization Development (OD) is a soft-systems approach to organizations, and is explained in more detail in Chapter 2.

transitions are important for success, and that they are a unique state that need “significant management attention and planning.”

Effective operational transitions are crucial for success due to their relationship with tempo, momentum, and initiative. Initiative, or the ability to set or dictate the terms of action, is fundamental for successful operations according to Army doctrine.⁷ However, simply seizing the initiative is not enough. An adaptive adversary will quickly negate any temporary advantages gained by seizing the initiative that are not exploited, so units must find a way to retain the initiative. One way to retain the initiative is to operate at a tempo, or pace of operations, that overwhelms the enemy’s ability to make decisions and react. Transitions are a vital component in this equation since units that rapidly and effectively transition from one operation to another build an overwhelming momentum that prevents the enemy from seizing the initiative for his own use.

While Army doctrine couches the discussion concerning initiative primarily in terms of combat operations at the tactical and operational levels, this idea applies in other ways as well. From a campaign perspective, the ability to rapidly and effectively transition between phases in a campaign is crucial to seizing and retaining the initiative throughout the duration of a campaign.⁸ This includes the transition from pre-combat to combat operations as well as the transition from combat to post-combat operations. Since national objectives are often accomplished during the post-combat phase, it is imperative that planners focus sufficient attention on this critical transition. This is particularly important in the current post-Cold War environment where decision makers can rarely justify the use of force only in terms of national interest.⁹ Since the

⁷ FM 3-0, 4-15.

⁸ FM 3-0, 6-14. See also Joint Publication 3-0, Chapter 3, page 18. See also JP 5-00.1, Chapter 2, page 16. Current joint and Army doctrine recognizes that U.S. forces can rarely defeat an enemy in a single battle or operation, so planners and commanders develop phases to help “visualize and think through the entire operation.” Phases provide a conceptual tool to help synchronize subordinates, ensure unity of effort, and provide flexibility for commanders. They may occur sequentially or simultaneously, and generally integrate and synchronize a group of related operations into more manageable parts to help identify requirements in terms of forces, resources, time, space, and purpose.

⁹ The Bush Administration stated that one of the reasons for U.S. intervention in Iraq included freeing the Iraqi people “to determine for themselves the future of their country.” Taken from “Statement of the Atlantic Summit: A Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People,” Internet,

national leadership often must justify the use of force in terms of other normative principles such as the spread of democracy, the post-combat phase is crucial in maintaining domestic and international support.¹⁰ Since this support provides freedom of action and facilitates accomplishing national objectives, military planners cannot disregard this transition despite the obvious temptation to ignore it since it occurs after combat operations.¹¹

Any attempt to understand why the Army has difficulty transitioning to post-combat operations despite their obvious importance leads to additional, more in-depth, questions. The answers to these questions not only facilitate understanding operational level transitions, but also provide a logical framework for the remainder of the study. Additionally, they reveal that the Army's problems with transitioning to post-combat operations result from a failure to apply a few key concepts concerning transitions.

The first series of questions address the conceptual approach to transitions. What conceptual model helps with examining and evaluating transitions? Does it apply to all transitions? What criteria result from using the model? As previously mentioned, doctrine defines transitions and addresses their importance in maintaining the initiative. It also reinforces the view that all transitions have common characteristics and planning considerations.¹² However, it fails

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030316-1.html>, last accessed 10 March 2004. Dr. Richard Schultz, Professor of International Politics at The Fletcher School of Law at Tufts University, states four general guidelines for the use of force in the post-cold war environment in his study, *In the Aftermath of War: US Support for Reconstruction and Nation-Building in Panama Following Just Cause*. First, in addition to countering a threat to an identifiable interest, the use of force will also have to foster some larger normative purpose. Two, the state or entity against which military force is directed must have both lost credibility and be seen as acting outside the bounds of acceptable international behavior. Three, the use of force should conform with the principles of proportionality and discrimination. Finally, following military actions, the US should have a follow on policy that contributes to a positive consolidation of the situation.

¹⁰ Post-combat international support is often in the form of donors, peacekeepers, etc.

¹¹ FM 3-0, 4-16 states, "Retaining the initiative requires planning beyond the initial operation and anticipating possible events. The higher the echelon...the further in advance the staff must plan."

¹² Ibid. 6-20. FM 3-0 states, "the transition between operations may be the most difficult follow-on operation to accomplish," (the others being reconstitution and conflict termination). However, it offers very little insight into how to plan or mitigate the risks associated with transitions except to state that commanders need to "anticipate and plan for them as part of any future operation." Despite these shortcomings, this is an improvement from previous doctrine since earlier versions of FM 101-5, the immediate predecessor to FM 3-0, did not address transitions or post-conflict operations at all.

to provide specific enough guidance to help determine why some transitions are more successful than other transitions.

Without a commonly accepted framework to examine all transitions, many analysts approach the transition to post-conflict operations as a unique event in a conflict. Depending on their particular view, they attribute poor transitions to errors in planning, flawed doctrine, deficient training, lack of interagency coordination, or misguided military culture.¹³ While these conclusions are certainly valid and contribute to understanding transitions, they are limited in some degree by the view that the post-combat transition is unique. Many times, analysts fail to explore the conceptual underpinning regarding transitions or provide a way to link all transitions together. As a result, important insights, and other potential solutions, are lost.

The robust nature of systems thinking, however, provides an analytical framework for understanding and evaluating all transitions regardless of when they occur in a campaign.¹⁴ In some cases, the particular conclusions might be similar for both approaches, but the method of analysis used in reaching those conclusions is dramatically different. Consequently, the systems approach to transitions offers a more comprehensive solution. As an example, instead of concluding that the difficulties surrounding the post-combat transition result directly from the weaknesses of a specific post-combat plan, this monograph reinforces the idea role that focuses on the linkages between the combat and post-combat plans. It explores the relationship between the plans as well as the actual transition of command and control organizations and forces. In other words, it looks at how organizations transition from one state to another using a systems methodology.

¹³ Dr. John Fishel's work, *The Fog of Peace: Planning and Executing the Restoration of Panama*, is just one example. He offers excellent conclusions, but does not offer any general framework for transitions. His primary conclusions concerning the problems associated with the post-combat transition in Operation JUST CAUSE include the need to effectively articulate political-military strategic objectives in terms of a clear end-state, the need for inter-agency integration in the planning effort, and the need to provide adequate resources in terms of money at the immediate conclusion of hostilities.

¹⁴ For the purposes of this paper, "systems thinking," "systems approach," and "systems theory" are interchangeable and imply any methodology that uses the concept of systems to explain a phenomenon.

Using the ideas of Beckhard and Harris as a guide, the organizational development approach discussed later establishes an analytical framework that logically connects the pre-change state and the post-change state. It does this by viewing the transition process as four inter-related elements consisting of understanding the pre-change or present state, clarifying the desired post-change or future state, understanding the conditions relating to the transition, and the transition plan. Since transitions are complex and rarely fall into simple and neatly organized categories, establishing criteria that sort different transitions into categories of “good” or “bad” is not very effective. Consequently, the criteria for these case studies focus on clarifying and understanding the four parts of Beckhard and Harris’s transition framework. As an example, the question, “Were the conditions for the transition explicitly identified?” helps clarify the second element, “understanding the conditions related to the transition,” and offers a method to examine and compare the case studies.

With the framework and corresponding criteria established, discussion turns to the second set of questions concerning transitions. Specifically, what does the Army do in successful transitions during combat operations that it fails to do in post-combat transitions? In order to gain a good appreciation of the similarities and differences between various transitions and compare the theoretical model to reality, this study discusses two historical case studies – one that highlights a transition between two combat phases, and another that highlights a transition to the post-combat phase. The first case study, which illustrates a transition between combat phases, focuses on the transition from the air war that began on 17 January 1991 to the ground war that began on 24 February in Operation DESERT STORM. The second case study, on the other hand, focuses on the transition from combat operations to post-combat operations in Operations JUST CAUSE and PROMOTE LIBERTY.

There is a substantial body of knowledge, both historical and analytical, concerning these interventions. Both revealed strengths and weaknesses in US military doctrine and equipment, and sparked considerable discussions about topics such as the role of airpower, strategic

deployability, and post-conflict planning, but the discussion for this study focuses on answering the following questions. What do recent military interventions such as Operation DESERT STORM and Operation JUST CAUSE illustrate concerning transitions? What are the differences, and similarities, between transitioning in earlier phases of a campaign and transitioning from combat operations to post-conflict operations? What is the context or environment in which the military conducts transitions? What conclusions can we draw from applying this approach?

While FM 3-0 states that transitions occur at all levels of war, this study focuses on operational level transitions such as moving from the shaping phase of a campaign to the decisive combat phase.¹⁵ Every transition reflects the classic planning dilemma of dividing scarce resources between the needs of the present and the needs of an uncertain future, but the operational level transition is particularly difficult both physically and conceptually.¹⁶ The distances and time involved to mobilize, deploy, and reorganize forces at the operational level greatly complicates the transition process. Additionally, transitions at the operational level, particularly the transition to the post-combat phase, are not necessarily limited to military organizations. The heavy reliance on other organizations and agencies outside the military after cessation of hostilities makes the transition to the post-combat phase extremely difficult at the operational level. Accordingly, the historical case studies and conclusions deal exclusively with operational level units, and only refer anecdotally to tactical level organizations to illustrate certain points. Most of the discussion concerning Operation Desert Storm (ODS) revolves around US Central Command (CENTCOM), Central Command Air Force (CENTAF) and Third Army.

¹⁵ FM 3-0, 6-20. A passage of lines between two units is a transition at the tactical level. Moving from peace to war is an example of a transition at the strategic level. Joint Publication 1-02 defines the “operational level of war” as “the level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas. Activities at this level link tactics and strategy...These activities imply a broader dimension of time or space than do tactics...and provide the means by which tactical successes are exploited to achieve strategic objectives.”

¹⁶ These scarce resources include everything from actual forces and supplies to the energy and attention of a commander and his staff. JP 5-00.1 states in Chapter 2, *Joint Doctrine for Campaign Planning*, “The challenge for planners, then, is to reconcile the reality of time-oriented deployment of forces and sustainment with the event-driven phasing of operations.”

For Operation JUST CAUSE, Joint Task Force –South (JTF-S), US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), US Army South (USARSO), and the Civil Military Operations Task Force (CMOTF) are the primary organizations.

Through these case studies, the reader gains an understanding of some of the practical aspects of operational level transitions as well as an appreciation for the strengths and weaknesses of the conceptual model. Using the ideas from above to focus the discussion, attention now turns to developing the conceptual model and criteria.

CHAPTER 2: DEVELOPING THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

References to “systems thinking” are common today – particularly in business and leadership books like Peter Senge’s *The Fifth Discipline*.¹⁷ However, many of these works do not address the intellectual foundation of their work or its relationship to other fields of the systems movement. Unlike some of these works, this chapter establishes the validity of using a systems-based model for transitions by discussing the origins and evolution of the systems movement. It concludes with a set of criteria developed using this approach to assist in analyzing transitions in later chapters.

THE ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF THE SYSTEMS MOVEMENT

The way in which people solve problems and learn about the world evolve over time, and this explains why the systems view is a relatively new, and needed, approach to problem solving. For centuries, researchers very ably analyzed phenomena by using the analytic approach developed by men such as Descartes.¹⁸ In the analytic approach, researchers divide the phenomena into smaller, more “manageable,” components, develop an understanding of these components, and then reassemble the components back into the original form to understand the whole.¹⁹ This approach involves two fundamental assumptions: first, dividing the phenomenon into components does not distort the phenomenon, and second, the component characteristics are essentially the same whether examined individually or as part of the whole.²⁰ In other words, the interaction between the components is trivial, and the whole is essentially a sum of the parts. As a

¹⁷ Peter Senge’s *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of a Learning Organization* provides a systems-based approach to leading organizations. Dr. Senge is the Director of the Center for Organizational Learning at MIT’s Sloan School of Management. He contends in his book that businesses and organizations must master five disciplines to be successful – one of which is systems thinking.

¹⁸ Dr. Peter Checkland, “Science and the Systems Movement” in *Systems Behavior*, 26. Dr. Checkland is currently a Professor of Systems at the Lancaster University Management School in England and a pioneer in “soft-systems” (ill-structured problems that are difficult to define and quantify). This article provides an excellent account of the origins of the systems movement.

¹⁹ Often referred to as Reductionism. As Dr. Checkland mentions, reductionism is part of a larger process based on rational thought and experimentation that reduces the complexity of the real world into repeatable experiments that help refute a hypothesis.

²⁰ Checkland, p. 26.

result, a particular input yields a corresponding output, and a slight change in the input yields a correspondingly slight change in the output. This relatively simple method is extremely effective, and works very well in disciplines such as physics where the interactions between elements are relatively minimal and the result is essentially an aggregation of the smaller elements. In fact, this approach has been effective enough to enable man to master most of the physical universe and considerably improved his lot in life.

However, the analytic approach, despite its effectiveness, contains a significant limitation that emerged as a new group of researchers and scientists tried to deal with problems emerging in the 20th century. Namely, the assumptions underlying the analytical approach are not appropriate for dealing with complex, or non-linear, systems.²¹ In complex systems, the interaction between various components cannot be discounted. In fact, understanding the interaction between components is essential for understanding the system. Additionally, the components only make sense in relation to the whole; therefore examining individual components in isolation is devoid of meaning. The final assumption for the analytical approach that does not apply to complex systems relates to the relationship between the input and output of the system. In complex systems, a slight change in the input does not yield a correspondingly slight change in the output. In other words, the output is distinctly non-linear. As a result, the analytical approach does not deal effectively with social phenomena and other “real-world” problems.²² Since warfare is a distinctly complex, non-linear phenomenon, any attempt to use analytical, reduction-based approaches to explain problems such as transitions is flawed.²³

Systems thinking, or thinking in terms of “wholeness,” developed over many years through several different avenues of research as scientists attempted to develop effective methods

²¹ Senge mentions that complexity falls into two categories – detail complexity and dynamic complexity. Detail complexity refers to the number of interactions and components in the system, while dynamic complexity refers to the relationship between the input and the output. One does not equate to the other. In this case, complexity is synonymous with dynamic complexity, i.e. non-linear systems.

²² Checkland, p. 31.

for dealing with complex systems. Although scientists involved in “hard” sciences began the dialogue concerning systems thinking and laid the foundation for the future development of the systems movement by providing definitions and articulating the fundamental concepts of systems thinking, social scientists quickly used these concepts to develop theories relating to the “soft” sciences.²⁴ Unlike the analytical approach, systems thinking provided a way, to describe, predict, and potentially control the behavior of very complex systems by using a holistic approach that accounts for the complex interactions and characteristics of a particular system.²⁵ Instead of talking about causal links, they attempted to define problems and solutions in terms of interactions and other systems concepts. As a result, systems based techniques such as scheduling theory, decision theory, queuing theory, and organization theory emerged from these new concepts to handle complex problems.²⁶

These theories are interdisciplinary and holistic in their approach, and are useful for solving, or at least gaining insights into, complex problems that are essentially non-linear and have strong interactions between components. For example, queuing theory, or optimization under conditions of crowding, applies to both the line at Burger King and the “line” of fire commands waiting in the queue at a battalion fire direction center. Decision theory, a mathematical theory concerned with choices among alternatives, applies to buying a car as much as choosing among different courses of action.²⁷ Systems theory is not a static body of thought,

²³ Linda Beckerman, *The Non-Linear Dynamics of War*, available online at <http://www.calresco.org/beckerman/nonlindy.htm>.

²⁴ Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a biologist by trade, is widely considered the founder of the systems movement in recognition of his efforts to unite the various systems ideas under one conceptual, mathematically rigorous, theory known as General Systems Theory (GST). This theory provided some of the basic definitions of systems thinking and emphasized the multi-disciplinary application of systems thinking as well as the need for scientific rigor. However, GST is not very useful as a practical analysis tool for all systems related problems.

²⁵ *Systems One: An Introduction to Systems Thinking* defines a system as a “collection of parts which interact with each other to function as a whole.” This has several implications. First, all the parts of the system must be in their proper place and must be functioning in order for the system to work. Second, understanding the interaction between the components in the system is fundamental for understanding the system. Finally, a system must be considered in terms of wholeness.

²⁶ Checkland, 28.

²⁷ This is based on author’s studies in Operations Research at Kansas State University.

nor is it limited to a few rigid ideas. The theory grows and evolves over time as researchers, theorists, and practitioners add to the body of knowledge.

Social scientists began using systems approaches to human organizations soon after the beginning of the systems movement since it seemed to offer a new, and potentially revolutionary, way of examining the complex behavior of people.²⁸ Two of these approaches, Organizational Theory and Organizational Development apply systems concepts to organizations to gain a better understanding of how complex organizations function. Although both of these approaches are very broad and have multiple definitions, Organizational Theory generally addresses the design and behavior of organizations while Organizational Development specifically focuses on planned change within an organization.²⁹ These inter-disciplinary approaches identified common principles that governed all organizations and addressed issues such as organizational structure and the evolution of organizations in a changing environment. Since these theories are inter-disciplinary in nature, they provide a logical starting point for examining organizational issues within the military.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND CRITERIA

Since doctrine fails to provide a conceptual framework for examining transitions, and Organizational Development (OD) theory applies to planning change within all types of organizations, the proposed conceptual framework for transitions comes from Organizational Development literature. Although most of the OD literature is about planning change in the context of long-term change within an organization, it offers a logical launching point for looking at relatively “short-term” transitions as well. As mentioned in the opening chapter, Beckhard and Harris present a model for the change process in any large organization. They believe that the

²⁸ F.E. Kast and J.E. Roseweig, “The Modern View: A Systems Approach” in, *Systems Behavior*, 47. Also, see Beer, *Organization Change and Development, A Systems View*, 17.

²⁹ Wendell L. French, et al., *Organization Development, Theory, Practice, and Research*, 6. Dr. Beer defines OD as a process for diagnosing organizational problems by looking for incongruence between environment, structures, processes, and people. OD often takes a more “people” oriented approach to

change process in large complex systems has several aspects – four of which, paraphrased slightly, form the conceptual framework for transitions used in this study.³⁰ First, organizations must have a clear and accurate picture of the present (pre-change) state. Second, organizations must have a clear understanding of the desired future (post-change) state. Three, organizations must understand and be able to identify the conditions indicating the need to transition. And four, organizations must develop a plan for managing the transition state. This model, though certainly flawed in some respects, provides an acceptable initial framework to analyze transitions in a systematic fashion.

Additional criteria for analyzing transitions to the necessary level of detail result from combining the subsequent discussion from Beckhard and Harris with military concepts.³¹ As an example, Beckhard and Harris list four important issues for designing the strategy to manage a transition.³² One of these issues relates to determining what needs changing. They mention potential candidates for change such as organizational culture or specific organizational structures. For this paper, the criteria incorporate the concepts but not the specific phrases used by Beckhard and Harris. Importantly, these criteria do not use a reduction-based approach; instead, they focus on systems concepts such as organizational structure and interaction between organizations. They attempt to establish whether the organizational structure and plan facilitate an effective transition. While not all inclusive, these criteria offer an effective way to examine and compare all types of transitions.³³

organizational problems while Organizational Theory attempts to address many organizational problems using a more hard science approach.

³⁰ Beckhard and Harris, 16. The other two aspects in the process are: evaluating the change effort, and stabilizing the new condition. Although important, these aspects imply long-term aspects such as changes to organizational culture that are outside the scope of this study.

³¹ Chapters 3-6 of *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change*, focus on the specific strategies relating to planning, preparing, and executing the transition state.

³² Beckhard and Harris, 28.

³³ Much of Beckhard and Harris's work is true to the OD concept of focusing on changing organizational culture, values, and norms. While this is certainly important for long-term change in organizations, its relevance to the framework used in this study is marginal. As a result, the criteria do not incorporate any of the aspects of transitions relating to organizational culture.

As stated before, the first component of the framework states that military organizations must have a clear and accurate picture of the present, or pre-change, situation. An unstated, and potentially catastrophic, assumption in many cases is that an organization understands the current situation.³⁴ In some ways, the slang expression, “You don’t know what you don’t know” is exactly on target. Businesses might not collect the data that indicates a rising problem until too late to avert a crisis. Military organizations face the same problem due to the uncertain environment in which they operate. Military organizations mitigate this problem through several organizational means. First, the command and control structure, equipment, and reporting procedures focus significant resources on understanding the status of friendly forces. Second, the military has intelligence organizations with their own collection assets that specifically focus on understanding the enemy. Consequently, the two criteria that support this component of the transition framework focus on these two elements. Specifically, are the organizational structures, equipment, and processes adequate to understand the status of friendly forces at a proper level to facilitate necessary decision-making and planning? And, are the organizational structures, equipment, and processes adequate to understand the status of enemy forces at a proper level to facilitate necessary decision-making and planning? Answers might reveal that an ineffective transition was partly the result of the organization not having a clear and accurate picture of the present situation due to flaws in organizational structure, equipment, or processes.³⁵

The second component of the framework states that military organizations must have a clear understanding of the desired future, or post-change, state. Beckhard and Harris contend that this must include “clear and explicit descriptions of the desired state of affairs after the change.”³⁶ In other words, the “correctness” or appropriateness of the plan for the future state is not particularly relevant in this discussion. The real issue is whether an organization has a clear

³⁴ Beckhard and Harris, 21.

³⁵ Some would argue that assumptions about the enemy, or the mental models used in interpreting the information, are another key component of understanding the present state. This idea is not explored in this study.

understanding of what it wants to accomplish in the desired future state to focus its efforts. As a result, the criteria focus on the process of how an organization develops this understanding. Do the units involved have the needed organizational structure, expertise, resources, and conceptual framework to plan the future phase? This question requires several subordinate questions. First, is the organizational structure adequate to plan the future state? Second, does the organizational structure facilitate “linking” the plan for the future state with the present condition? Third, is the planning staff an ad-hoc organization or a formal planning staff? Fourth, do the planners have the appropriate expertise? If not, are they able to incorporate others who have the appropriate expertise? Finally, is there an adequate doctrinal concept to guide planning for the future state?

The third component of the transition framework is that military organizations must understand and be able to identify the conditions indicating the need to transition. FM 3-0 points out that, “Commanders establish clear conditions for how and when these transitions occur.”³⁷ It goes on to state that, “Both branches and sequels should have execution criteria, carefully reviewed before their implementation and updated based on assessment of current operations.”³⁸ What conditions (both friendly and enemy, current state and future state) indicate the need to transition? Are the conditions explicitly identified? Are these conditions appropriate and detailed? Additionally, are there sufficient assets dedicated to identifying the conditions?

Finally, as Beckhard and Harris point out, “most organizational changes occur over a period of time...the organization management must devise a strategy for coping with the confusion of roles, decision making, and authority that will occur during the ‘transition period’.”³⁹ In other words, military organizations must have an effective plan to get from the present state to the future state. The plan must link the present state, the conditions, and the future state together. The plan must accurately predict future needs in terms of force composition and

³⁶ Beckhard and Harris, 27.

³⁷ FM 3-0, 6-5. JP 3-0, Chapter 3, page 18 also states that commanders establish conditions for transitions during planning.

³⁸ Ibid. 6-5.

capability and account for the required time to get those forces in place. In other words, it should be proactive in nature.⁴⁰ The following criteria help explore this component of the transition framework. Is the organizational structure adequate to prepare for the future state? Is the planning headquarters also the executing headquarters? Does the plan ensure the appropriate forces are in place when needed to immediately affect the situation? Does the plan account for the transition period by establishing temporary organizational changes? Does the plan explicitly identify the forces and capabilities required? Do the forces used in the transition have the necessary training, skill sets, and resources? Does the plan account for the necessary time to mobilize, deploy, train, and reorganize the force?

CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING TRANSITION FRAMEWORK

To summarize, transitions between phases are important for maintaining operational and strategic momentum, but recent interventions show that the military has some difficulty effectively transitioning to the post-combat phase. Military planners cannot ignore the post-combat transition since the country normally accomplishes its national objectives during the post-combat phase. Doctrine addresses transitions, but does not provide sufficient detail to determine the particular problems surrounding the transition to the post-combat phase, so a different conceptual model is required. The systems-based model presented above accommodates all types of transitions and all environments. It provides a technique, along with some related criteria, for comparing a contrasting various transitions and analyzing historical case studies.

While U.S. military doctrine does not explicitly state this framework, it reflects these ideas to some degree. First, doctrine recognizes the need to be flexible by advocating future planning that is conditions based. Second, doctrine recommends using phases, branches, and sequels as mental tools to plan extended operations and campaigns. This approach facilitates thinking about transitions by defining what constitutes the present state and the desired future

³⁹ Beckhard and Harris, 28.

state. Third, military organizations commonly reorganize based on the task to focus the appropriate assets and resources at the critical time and place.

Conceptual models are only useful if they help solve problems, and they are often only the first step in developing solutions to problems. The next step, in this case, is applying the model to some historical case studies to see how well the theoretical model accounts for reality.

⁴⁰ FM 3-0, 6-11. “Commanders maintain momentum by anticipating transitions and moving rapidly between types of operations,”

CHAPTER 3: TRANSITIONS IN THE REAL WORLD

Operations DESERT STORM (ODS) and JUST CAUSE/PROMOTE LIBERTY

(OJC/PL) provide interesting and different views of transitions. While some might focus on the differences between the two interventions – jungle versus desert, unilateral versus coalition, rapid deployment and execution versus prolonged buildup – their similarities in terms of troops, doctrine, and equipment make comparison of the transitions far easier.

This chapter uses the previously established transition framework and criteria to examine two transitions. The first case study is the transition in Operation DESERT STORM from the air war that began on 17 January 1991 to the ground war that began on 24 February. The second case study is the transition from combat operations in Operation JUST CAUSE that began on 20 December 1989 to post-combat operations as part of Operation PROMOTE LIBERTY and the organization the Military Support Group (MSG) on 17 January 1990. The case studies provide insights into several aspects of transitions. Specifically, what are the differences and similarities between the two transitions? Are there lessons from one that apply to the other? What conclusions can we draw about transitions in general?

The first case study focuses on the transition from the air war to the ground war in Operation DESERT STORM. Although it occurs after the intervention in Panama, the two transitions appear to be independent in the sense that there is no evidence that any lessons concerning transitions from Panama influenced the planning of the transition in Operation DESERT STORM. As a result, the discussion focuses initially on Operation DESERT STORM to provide insights into the transition that occurs within the context of combat operations. As stated in the opening chapter, this transition is certainly different from the Panama case study in that it involves the transition between two services and both the pre-change state and the post-change state are combat in nature; however, the case study still provides an effective vehicle for examining transitions in terms of the conceptual framework.

OPERATION DESERT STORM

The United States reacted quickly to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990. On 5 August, President Bush declared that America would not tolerate Iraqi actions and stated four U.S. policy objectives: immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces in Kuwait; restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government; stability and security of region; and safety of American citizens abroad.⁴¹ By 8 August, US forces deployed to the Persian Gulf region to defend against any Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia.

Although the initial forces deployed as a deterrent, planning for offensive operations to enforce US aims began almost immediately. Planning continued for several months as US and coalition forces deployed to the region.⁴² The CENTCOM operation order stated, the "offensive campaign is a four-phased air, naval and ground offensive operation to destroy Iraqi capability to produce and employ weapons of mass destruction, destroy Iraqi offensive capability, cause the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, and restore the legitimate government of Kuwait."⁴³ The OPOD stated that operations would focus on five theater objectives and be divided into four phases: the strategic air campaign, gaining air superiority within the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations (KTO), preparing KTO for ground operations, and the ground attack.⁴⁴ The OPOD stated the conditions associated with each phase, gave a tentative timeline, and stated that execution of the phases would not necessarily be sequential.⁴⁵ With the beginning of the air war on 17 January 1991, preparation for the transition to the ground war began in earnest.

The transition framework outlined in the previous chapter describes four interrelated components: organizations must have a clear and accurate picture of the present (pre-change)

⁴¹ GAO/NSIAD-97-134, *Operation Desert Storm: Evaluation of the Air Campaign*, 194. See also National Security Directive 45, dated 20 August 1990, *US Policy in Response to the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait*, http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsd/nsd_45.htm.

⁴² More than 25 countries joined the coalition in some capacity.

⁴³ GAO/NSIAD-97-134, 195.

⁴⁴ GAO/NSIAD-97-134, 195. The theater objectives were: destroy Iraq's capability to wage war, gain and maintain air supremacy, cut Iraqi supply lines to the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations, destroy Iraq's chemical, biological, and nuclear capabilities, and liberate Kuwait City.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.195.

state, organizations must have a clear understanding of the desired future (post-change) state, organizations must understand and be able to identify the conditions indicating the need to transition, and finally, organizations must develop a plan for managing the transition state. Using this model as a guide, the transition from the air war to the ground war in ODS illustrates the complexity of planning and executing operational transitions.

PLANNING AND EXECUTION OF THE TRANSITION

The first component of the transition model relates to the CENTCOM leadership's understanding of the friendly and enemy situations during the air war. According to the final report to Congress from the Department of Defense concerning the Persian Gulf War, "probably no set of American commanders has had more information available about the battlefield and enemy forces than the commanders in Operation DESERT STORM."⁴⁶ While this statement might appear to be disingenuous given some of the significant intelligence related problems encountered during the air war, it is essentially true.⁴⁷ The national and theater level intelligence architecture was insufficient to meet initial intelligence demands, but time, the relative openness of the terrain, and the overmatch in technology eventually fixed many of the problems. Another factor, organizational adaptability, also contributed to the improvement. National intelligence agencies and CENTCOM created ad-hoc organizations, modified other organizations, and changed organizational relationships to meet the demands of CENTCOM planners and leaders.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, 113.

⁴⁷ The fruitless search for Scud missiles in the western Iraqi desert and the problems concerning Battle Damage Assessment are just two examples. General Schwarzkopf offered varied assessments of the intelligence in the Gulf War, but stated in his testimony to Congress that the "intelligence community as a whole did a great job" and that the coalition victory could be "directly attributed to the excellent intelligence picture." U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, Department of Defense Appropriations for 1992, Hearings before the subcommittee on the Department of Defense (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1991) Part 2, page 288, 290. Also, *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, 333. Tactical level commanders also highlighted the lack of practical tactical level intelligence once the ground war began. See *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, for more discussion of intelligence related problems.

⁴⁸ *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, 335. See also *Gulf War Air Power Survey*. Executive Summary, 128.

As a result, CENTCOM planners and leaders possessed an accurate understanding of Iraqi air and ground force disposition, composition, and intent during the air war.⁴⁹

In addition to understanding the status of enemy forces, CENTCOM leaders also possessed an excellent understanding of the status of friendly forces during the air war. This understanding was certainly a function of the command and control arrangements as well as the communication capabilities of the coalition force. And while none of these elements was perfect, they certainly enabled key leaders to understand the status of friendly and enemy forces during the air war with a remarkable degree of fidelity given the vast geographic area and number of forces involved.⁵⁰ Despite the problems identified in many accounts written after the war, the use of a Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) at CENTCOM and the robust Tactical Air Control System enabled the coalition to effectively plan, prepare, and execute an air war across the entire theater involving more than 2,700 coalition and U.S. aircraft.⁵¹ This command structure ensured unity of effort in terms of both intelligence collection as well as targeting.⁵² Coupled with modern communications technology, operational level commanders across the entire theater to include General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Central Command (CINCCENT) received daily updates about the status of friendly and enemy forces that were fairly accurate and timely given the tremendous number of aircraft sorties and geographic scope of the war.⁵³ This situational awareness at the highest levels allowed the CINCCENT and his subordinate commanders to issue new guidance when needed as circumstances changed.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *Gulf War Air Power Survey*. Executive Summary, 10.

⁵⁰ See *Gulf War Air Power Survey* Executive Summary Report and Volume 1 for a thorough discussion of the problems identified relating to command and control, intelligence, and planning for the air war – particularly the problems encountered with constructing and disseminating the Air Tasking Order (ATO).

⁵¹ *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, 101. See the *Gulf War Air Power Survey* (GWAPS) Volume 1 for a more complete discussion of the benefits and shortcomings associated with the JFACC concept in Operation DESERT STORM.

⁵² *Ibid.* 101.

⁵³ Swain, Richard M. “Lucky War” *Third Army in Desert Storm*, 182. See also *It Doesn’t Take a Hero* by General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, page 504 for an example of the daily updates.

⁵⁴ *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, 101.

According to the second component of the transition model, CENTCOM needed to have a clearly articulated and understood plan for the ground war (post change state) in order to facilitate an effective transition. Although in the context of combat operations this concept seems so obvious as to be trivial, many times at the operational level U.S. forces enter combat operations without a clear understanding of the desired post-combat state. In this instance, the plan for the ground war was essentially complete, and the theater architecture to support future operations was in place when the air war commenced on 17 January.⁵⁵ The plan called for coalition and US forces to fix Iraqi forces in Kuwait with a ground attack from Saudi Arabia and a feint from the Marines to the east in the Persian Gulf while Third Army turned the Iraqi defenses in the west, severed their lines of communication, and destroyed the Iraqi Republican Guard. Third Army divided the ground campaign into four phases: logistical buildup, pre-positioning, ground offensive, and consolidation. The planners expected the entire ground operation to take about eight weeks with the actual fighting during the ground offensive to last about two weeks.⁵⁶ Understanding the actual plan for the ground war is not as important as understanding the relationship between transitions and a clearly understood view of the desired end state. The conditions, or processes, involved in achieving a view of the desired end state are important.

The planning effort for the ground war began soon after commitment of U.S. troops to the region, and continued up until the time of the offensive.⁵⁷ In other words, it was iterative in nature and changed to account for new circumstances. Four interrelated areas – organizational structure, expertise of the planners, resources allocated to the planning effort, and the conceptual framework – help describe this planning effort. The original planning cell at CENTCOM was ad-

⁵⁵ Swain, 103. GEN Schwarzkopf and his planners briefed the SECDEF and CJCS concerning the ground war on 20 December. The final briefing took place on 9 February.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 91.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 75.

hoc and only possessed about ten members. Over time however, this cell dramatically increased not only in number, but also in expertise to ensure effective planning.⁵⁸

Several other key elements were in place to facilitate an effective understanding of the future state. First, the planning effort involved key decision-makers at many levels of command, from the CINCCENT down to tactical level commanders.⁵⁹ As a result, leaders at all echelons possessed a clear understanding of the ground offensive as well as the relationship between it and the final stage of the air offensive. Two, subordinate organizations were integrated into the planning effort as soon as practical. This included designating Third Army as the unit responsible for planning the ground offensive.⁶⁰ Not only did this facilitate collaboration among subordinates, it represented a significant investment of resources (in terms of both manpower and other assets such as intelligence) in the planning effort as well as providing a mechanism to integrate the planning effort for the air war and the ground war. Finally, and very importantly, an established doctrine existed to guide the planning of the ground war.⁶¹

The third component of the transition model addresses conditions and their relationship to transitions. Properly identified conditions, when effectively tied to decisions, allow organizations to transition more effectively by enabling them to anticipate events on the battlefield and ensure the proper organizations are in the proper place to meet any new contingencies. In this particular case, CENTCOM needed to understand the conditions indicating the need to transition from the air war to the ground offensive. From a systems perspective, focusing exclusively on the content of the conditions does not provide enough insight into the relationship between conditions and transitions. Other areas, such as the feedback mechanism used to identify the condition, are important as well. For example, did CENTCOM planners explicitly identify conditions associated with the transition from the air war to the ground war? Did CENTCOM dedicate sufficient

⁵⁸ Ibid. 77.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 73. See also page 77 and *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, 228.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 76. See also page 84.

⁶¹ *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, page 237.

resources to identifying when conditions were met? Were the conditions enemy-oriented, friendly-oriented, or a combination of both? In this case, CENTCOM planners explicitly identified conditions for the transition to the ground war, and dedicated considerable national and theater level resources to determining if the conditions were met. Some of these conditions were enemy oriented while some focused on the status of friendly forces.

One of the most important enemy conditions linked to the transition from the air war to the ground war revolved around the status of Iraqi ground forces in the theater. As mentioned before, Phase III of the of the ODS campaign plan focused on battlefield preparation and listed several desired effects including reducing Iraqi combat effectiveness in the Kuwait Theater of Operations by 50%.⁶² This condition was an integral part of the planning since it enabled U.S. and coalition ground forces to achieve desirable force ratios at key points on the battlefield.⁶³ Since the stated requirement of 50% attrition was very broad, subordinate organizations such as CENTAF and Third Army spent a considerable amount of time and energy discussing how to define and measure 50% attrition. The final agreement essentially narrowed the focus to key weapon systems such as tanks, armored personnel carriers, and artillery without focusing on any particular Iraqi units or areas within the theater.⁶⁴

It is not enough to merely state the desired conditions. Organizations must dedicate sufficient resources to know, in a timely manner, when desired conditions are present. In this case, CENTCOM focused significant theater and national level assets on BDA of Iraqi units in the KTO to know when the Iraqi forces reached the desired 50% level of combat effectiveness. In addition to the estimates of physical destruction of Iraqi combat vehicles, the CINCCENT

⁶² *Operation Desert Storm: Evaluation of the Air Campaign*, 196. Some of the other desired effects included severing Iraqi supply lines and destroying Iraqi chemical, nuclear, and biological capability.

⁶³ Swain, 106. Planners for the ground war believed that VII Corps/Iraqi force ratio, the main effort in the ground offensive, appeared to be about 1.3:1. By combining the attrition from the air war with concentration of U.S. forces at key points on the battlefield, planners hoped to achieve a 11.5:1 ratio at the breach and a 2:1 ratio at the decisive point.

⁶⁴ GWAPS, 49.

included many other, less tangible and quantifiable, factors, such as status of supplies and morale in Iraqi units to determine overall combat effectiveness.⁶⁵ While the BDA process in ODS contained significant shortcomings, it was a key component in the decision-making process.⁶⁶ The CINCCENT used the status of Iraqi forces in the KTO as one of his primary conditions to determine when to launch the ground offensive.⁶⁷

The status of friendly forces in theater was another critical condition relating to the transition from the air war to the ground offensive.⁶⁸ In the early months of Operation DESERT SHIELD, GEN Schwarzkopf clearly stated that he needed more forces to properly conduct any ground offensive against Iraqi forces.⁶⁹ As a result, President Bush authorized the US Army to send VII Corps from Germany to Saudi Arabia.⁷⁰ Consequently, the final date for launching the ground offensive depended considerably on Third Army's ability to get the appropriate forces to the Line of Departure (LD).⁷¹ Not only did units have to deploy to the theater and prepare for combat operations, but the operational deception plan required the Third Army units attacking in the west to move into their final positions at the last possible moment in order to mislead the Iraqis about the main point of attack. As a result, considerable effort went into understanding the time needed to establish the appropriate sustainment architecture in the west, the time needed to move units into their attack positions, and the relationship to the air campaign.⁷² Daily updates to the CINCCENT facilitated synchronization between these competing efforts.⁷³

The final component of the transition framework demands that organizations conduct the appropriate planning to transition between the present state and future state. In other words, did

⁶⁵ *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, page 113.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 175.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 227.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 227. The other factors included force deployments, logistics buildup, weather forecasts, and attack preparations.

⁶⁹ Schwarzkopf, 417.

⁷⁰ Michael R. Gordon, "Bush Sends New Units to Gulf to Provide Offensive Option," *The New York Times*, 9 November 1990, A1. This force eventually grew to include three full divisions, an armored cavalry regiment, and additional support organizations.

⁷¹ Swain, p.106.

⁷² *Ibid.* 108.

the plan ensure the appropriate forces were in place when needed to immediately affect the situation? In this case, did the plan ensure that the proper units were in place on 24 February to execute the ground offensive? Several subordinate questions relate to this idea. Did the plan explicitly identify the forces and capabilities required? Did the forces used in the transition have the formal training, necessary skill sets, and resources? Did the plan account for the necessary time to mobilize, deploy, train, and reorganize the force? Was the planning headquarters for the future state also the executing headquarters? While these ideas might seem obvious in the context of combat operations, their real significance in the context of this study is their relationship to transitions.

As mentioned above, CENTCOM identified the requirements it needed to prosecute the ground war and built a plan based on when those units would be ready to prosecute the ground offensive. This included mobilizing, training, and deploying a substantial portion of the National Guard and Reserve as well as moving VII Corps forces stationed in Europe to Saudi Arabia.⁷⁴ Another important, and seemingly obvious fact, is that U.S. ground forces possessed the requisite training and equipment for the ground war.⁷⁵ Finally, Third Army acted not only as the planning headquarter for the ground war, but also as a key executing headquarters. All of these factors, along with the ones stated earlier, contributed to successful transition to the ground war on 24 February, 1991.

CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING TRANSITIONS BETWEEN COMBAT PHASES

There are numerous reasons for the U.S. victory in Operation DESERT STORM – better-equipped soldiers, better-trained units, superior doctrine, and excellent coalition partners – to name just a few.⁷⁶ From an operational art perspective however, one might argue that the success of the ground campaign was also a result of CENTCOM's ability to seize and retain the initiative.

⁷³ Ibid. 110.

⁷⁴ *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War*, page 387. From November 1990 to January 15, 1991, the number of U.S. forces in the theater effectively doubled.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 357.

CENTCOM seized the initiative with the air offensive, and just as important, retained the initiative by quickly transitioning to the ground offensive when conditions were right. By successfully applying the four aspects of the transition framework, CENTCOM not only had the right forces in the right place at the right time, but those forces did not have to pause once the ground war started in order to gain situational understanding. This rapid transition to the ground offensive limited Iraqi options and prevented Iraqi forces from retaking the initiative.

As mentioned above, CENTCOM's ability to rapidly and effectively transition to ground operations on 24 February was no accident. In fact, CENTCOM successfully met all four requirements of the transition framework. First, it had a clear understanding of the current situation. CENTCOM dedicated significant theater and national level resources to understanding the status of both friendly and enemy forces during the air war. As a result, the CINCCENT, along with his subordinate commanders, understood the status of current operations in relation to the desired conditions for transitioning to the next phase.

Second, CENTCOM had a clear concept of what it wanted to do in the future state – i.e. the ground war. In this case, CENTCOM developed a campaign plan that integrated the efforts of the air war and the ground war, established the relationship of one to the other, and identified conditions relating to the transition. Additionally, it allocated sufficient assets to planning and preparing for the future phase. Third Army possessed sufficient assets, resources, and expertise to plan and prepare for the ground war. This included Third Army developing its own intelligence requirements and focusing intelligence assets on those requirements in order to have immediate situational understanding when the ground offensive began. Finally, while there were shortcomings in some aspects of joint doctrine, AirLand Battle provided a common operational framework to guide planning and conduct of the ground campaign.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Ibid. xviii.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 237.

Third, CENTCOM clearly identified the conditions surrounding the transition and allocated significant resources to tracking the status of those conditions. The conditions were both friendly and enemy oriented, and were directly linked to the transition. In other words, CENTCOM viewed the conditions in terms of how the forces were positioned to begin the next phase – not how the forces were positioned to mark the end of the current phase. This idea is extremely important when considering the dilemma that most planners face; namely, how to balance the need to prepare for the next phase with the more pressing demands of the current phase. While Operation DESERT STORM showed the importance of conditions, it also clearly demonstrated the difficulty of assessing enemy based conditions.

Finally, CENTCOM ensured that the appropriate forces were in place to immediately execute the ground war. The plan accounted for the necessary time to mobilize, train, and deploy forces to the theater. Few organizations were ad-hoc. As a result, these organizations possessed the necessary skill sets, resources, and training to conduct the ground war.

These conclusions provide a baseline to examine the transition from combat to post-combat operations in Operation JUST CAUSE/PROMOTE LIBERTY by establishing a relationship between how CENTCOM planned and prepared for a transition with the transition framework. Conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of the transition framework as well as conclusions about the planning and execution of transitions are possible by comparing these results with the transition to post-combat operations in Panama.

OPERATION JUST CAUSE/PROMOTE LIBERTY

While the transition from the air war to the ground war in Operation DESERT STORM is an example of transitioning from one combat phase to another, the U.S. intervention in Panama in 1989 illustrates the difficulty of planning and executing the transition from combat to post-combat operations – particularly in a contingency setting. Neither the relative disparity in terms of combat power between the two sides, nor the relatively small scale and duration of the conflict

eased the problems of transitioning from combat to post-combat operations. The U.S. enjoyed many advantages in Panama - the planners knew the area and enemy intimately, and the planners had nearly two years to work on the plan. Most of the required infrastructure to support planning, preparation, and execution of the operation was already in place, and leaders and units enjoyed the unique opportunity of seeing their objectives in person before execution of the mission. However, even with these advantages, significant problems still appeared in the transition from combat to post-combat operations.

The transition from the air war to the ground war in Operation DESERT STORM examined earlier indicated some interesting conclusions about transitions within the context of combat operations. But what about the transition to post-combat operations? What insights about transitions come from examining the transition to post-combat operations in Panama? Are there any similarities with Operation DESERT STORM? By applying the same framework used earlier to the transition in Operation JUST CAUSE and comparing the conclusions to those of Operation DESERT STORM, some interesting ideas about transitions emerge.

PROBLEMS AND A SOLUTION TO PANAMA

As mentioned before, a singular event, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, triggered the U.S. intervention in the Middle East, but the intervention in Panama was a response to an escalating crisis over several years. For years, Noriega antagonized the Reagan and Bush administrations by supporting drug traffickers, violently suppressing domestic dissent, and rigging elections. In February 1988, American grand juries in Florida indicted Noriega on drug trafficking charges establishing the legal grounds to intervene in Panama.⁷⁸ This prompted the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) on 28 February to order United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) to review and revise a set of contingency plans for Panama known collectively as ELABORATE MAZE.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ronald H. Cole. *Operation JUST CAUSE, The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama, February 1988-January 1990*, 6.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 7. This set of plans was renamed PRAYERBOOK in March, 1989.

These plans, designed to be executed sequentially, simultaneously, or independently, included non-combatant evacuation operations, combat operations, and stability and support operations.⁸⁰

Tensions between the U.S. and Panama eased somewhat in the latter half of 1988, but they rose to crisis proportions in 1989 eventually leading to direct U.S. military intervention in December. The events leading up to this intervention included everything from anti-U.S. activities such as detaining school buses containing American children to actions against Panamanians. In May, Noriega nullified the results of a legitimate election, and his “supporters” beat the “victorious” candidates as cameras and television crews from around the world watched.⁸¹ In October, Noriega suppressed a coup attempt by one of his officers.⁸² In December, tensions between the two countries accelerated to crisis proportions. On December 15, Noriega pressured the leading legislative body in Panama on December 15, to declare him “maximum leader and head of government” and declare that “a state of war existed in Panama” with the United States.⁸³ The following evening, PDF forces killed a Marine lieutenant at a checkpoint, and detained and harassed a Navy lieutenant and his wife.⁸⁴ As domestic pressure mounted to do something, removing Noriega by overt military action became an increasingly attractive option. On December 17, 1989, President George H.W. Bush ordered U.S. forces to execute Operation JUST CAUSE.⁸⁵ On December 20, 1989, over 26,000 U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines invaded Panama to remove Noriega from power, install a legitimate government, protect American citizens, and protect the Panama Canal.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Ibid. 8. There were four plans in PRAYERBOOK. KLONDIKE KEY focused on non-combatant evacuation operations. POST TIME used forces stationed in Panama and forces from the U.S. to secure key facilities in the country such as the Panama Canal. BLUE SPOON used joint forces to conduct offensive operations to dismantle the PDF. BLIND LOGIC used the forces outlined in the other plans along with some Civil Affairs units to conduct stability and support operations.

⁸¹ Ibid. 10.

⁸² Ibid. 14.

⁸³ Fishel, 4.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 4.

⁸⁵ Cole, 29.

⁸⁶ Transcript of President George H.W. Bush’s address, Washington Post, Washington, D.C., December 21, 1989, A38.

Overall, the combat portion of the invasion went extremely well despite its complexity.⁸⁷ U.S. forces eliminated the PDF as a viable combat force within 24 hours. U.S. forces eventually captured Noriega and turned him over to U.S. legal authorities. The U.S. installed a new, democratically elected, government headed by Miguel Endara, the winner of the national election in May. Additionally, economic traffic through the Panama Canal suffered only minor disruptions. And this was at a relatively low cost in terms of U.S. casualties. Essentially, the combat operation was a resounding success.⁸⁸

However, the same adjectives did not apply to the post-combat portion of the plan. Within hours of the beginning of the invasion, massive looting and general lawlessness began in the major cities and continued for several days.⁸⁹ The economic losses amounted to several billion dollars.⁹⁰ Not only did this have a significant economic impact on the country, but it also convinced many that the U.S. did not adequately plan the post-combat phase. Combat troops faced the unenviable task of attempting to find PDF members while trying to restore and maintain civil order. The organizations responsible for assisting in restoration found themselves disorganized, undermanned, and without a clear plan.⁹¹ As a result, these organizations worked around the clock to restore government services across the country while trying to sort out command relationships.⁹² It took essentially a month - from December 20, 1989 to January 17, 1990 - for SOUTHCOM to establish a formal organization specifically task organized for the restoration of Panama.

PLANNING AND EXECUTION OF THE TRANSITION

The transition framework offers an effective way to examine the problems encountered in the transition to post-combat operations in Panama. The first component of the transition model

⁸⁷ Cole, page 72.

⁸⁸ Schultz, 19. Based on LTG Stiner interview with Army Times, dated 26 February 1990.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 28.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 28.

⁹¹ Ibid. 29.

⁹² Fishel, 34.

relates to SOUTHCOM and JTF-S understanding of the friendly and enemy situations during combat operations (the pre-change state). In this case, both SOUTHCOM and JTF-S benefited from the unusual conditions surrounding Operation JUST CAUSE. First, U.S. forces had been in Panama for many years due to the Panama Canal. As a result, U.S. forces lived on many bases throughout the country which provided not only convenient staging areas, but facilitated a very robust communications network that could span the most important parts of the country. In addition, planners knew virtually everything about the PDF – particularly their location and composition. Second, and despite the last few chaotic days leading up to the invasion, this crisis had been building for more than two previous years and encouraged the military to be prepared. Staffs reviewed contingency plans. Units rehearsed missions. Important command and control elements, such as the JTF-S headquarters positioned themselves inside the country before the invasion.⁹³ As a result, SOUTHCOM had an excellent understanding of both the friendly and enemy situations during combat operations. SOUTHCOM forces also perceived the rapid breakdown of law and order within the country as the PDF ceased to exist. This understanding of the current situation enabled the JTF to quickly task units to meet the changing circumstances.

The second element of the transition framework pertains to the post-change state. In other words, did SOUTHCOM or JTF-S units have a clear concept for the future state (i.e. the post-combat phase)? As mentioned before, the post-combat phase really involved two periods. The first period, the “transition period,” is the focus of this study and included the events from the time of the invasion until SOUTHCOM established the Military Support Group on 17 January. The second period began with the establishment of the MSG and continued until the Panamanian government was capable of functioning independently. While forces rarely go into a conflict without a plan for combat actions, the same cannot be said for the post-combat phase. In this case, SOUTHCOM had a plan for post-combat operations. However, SOUTHCOM and JTF-S failed to integrate their two plans resulting in neither one planning adequately for the problems

⁹³ Cole, 30. Both SOUTHCOM and JTF-S were stationed at Fort Clayton, Panama.

encountered immediately after the invasion. The command dynamics, the organizational structure in SOUTHCOM and JTF-S, and the lack of doctrine all contributed to the problems encountered during the transition.

Both the SOUTHCOM commander, General Thurman, and the JTF-S commander, LTG Stiner, focused exclusively on the planning for combat operations with little regard for the post-combat planning. In fact, General Thurman stated that he “did not even spend five minutes on BLIND LOGIC during [his] briefing as the incoming CINC” and admits that it was the “last priority” on his agenda at the time.⁹⁴ LTG Stiner conceded afterwards that they dedicated “insufficient attention” to the post-combat planning.⁹⁵ In fact, while the JTF-S plan contained a “transition” phase and units were ordered to be prepared to execute civil military operations, the order also stated that units should make “every effort...to minimize commitments of U.S. assets to support CA operations.”⁹⁶

The organizational structure also contributed to the lack of planning for the transition period. The planning effort for post-combat operations began in 1988 with the PRAYERBOOK series and continued up until the time of execution.⁹⁷ Since the J5 office was too small to conduct the planning in sufficient detail, a small team of Civil Affairs (CA) officers from the reserve unit dedicated to supporting SOUTHCOM came in to fully develop the plan.⁹⁸ Although this unit possessed significant area expertise, several organizational problems hampered their efforts. First, SOUTHCOM rotated small teams of CA officers into the region every month to work on the plan. A small group of planners remained in place to oversee the effort, but the constant rotation of planning teams hindered effective planning. The result was a plan that offered considerable information to help Second, different staff sections within SOUTHCOM planned the combat and

⁹⁴ Schultz, 16. See also page 19.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 19.

⁹⁶ Fishel, 36. Reference is from OPLAN 2-90, declassified August 14, 1990.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 7.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 14.

post-combat phases.⁹⁹ This problem continued when 18th Airborne Corps, which would later operate as the JTF-S headquarters, assumed primary responsibility for planning the combat operations. While this certainly improved the quality of the planning relating to the invasion of Panama, it exacerbated the disconnect between combat and post-combat planning since the SOUTHCOM J5 staff was still the lead organization for planning the post-combat operations. Additionally, concerns about operational security resulted in virtually all the planning being conducted within military circles at the expense of interagency input.¹⁰⁰ While this only had a marginal impact on the combat planning, it critically hampered the post-combat planning.

Finally, the post-combat planning suffered from a lack a mature doctrine concerning post-combat operations.¹⁰¹ Since there was not a doctrinal model for restoration of a country such as security, governance, justice, and economic well-being, planners failed to anticipate some key problems.¹⁰² The result was a plan that provided ample information about particular areas of Panama but did not present a coherent strategy for accomplishing the operational objectives.

The third element of the transition framework addresses conditions. As mentioned before, properly identified conditions, when effectively tied to decisions, allow organizations to transition more effectively by enabling them to anticipate events and make corresponding adjustments. In this case, SOUTHCOM, and JTF-S, needed to understand the conditions indicating the need to transition to post-combat operations. This transition involved changes in unit missions, boundaries, force capabilities, and task organization. Again, the specific conditions from the plan are not as important as understanding the role they played in the decision process. General Thurman decided to execute BLING LOGIC the same day as the invasion when it became apparent that the looting in Panama would soon reach crisis proportions. Although a nominal

⁹⁹ Ibid. 14.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 21.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 39.

¹⁰² Frederick Barton and Bathsheba Crocker, "A Wiser Peace: An Action strategy for a Post-Conflict Iraq", 14. SOUTHCOM established ad-hoc organizations such as the Judicial Liaison Group to help rebuild the court system.

government was already in place, newly inaugurated President Endara did not have the assets to establish control.¹⁰³ JTF-S was completely absorbed in combat operations and did not begin post-combat operations for several days. Essentially, the conditions stated in the OPLANs described specific phases of the intervention; they were not integrated with decisions.¹⁰⁴

The final element of the transition model demands that organizations conduct the appropriate planning to transition between the present state and future state. Did the plan ensure the appropriate forces were in place when needed to immediately affect the situation? Did the plan explicitly identify the forces and capabilities required? Did the plan account for the necessary time to mobilize, deploy, train, and reorganize the force? If not, did the forces used in the transition have the formal training, necessary skill sets, and resources?

Several instances in the initial days following the invasion clearly indicate that the planning did not properly integrate the combat phase with the post-combat phase. As a result, considerable confusion about roles, responsibilities, and command relationships dogged SOUTHCOM's efforts to establish order in the country. A key friction point between the two plans involved the use of the 361st CA Brigade. BLIND LOGIC essentially tasked the unit to form the bulk of the Civil Military Operations Task Force (CMOTF) under United States Army South (USARSO) control, but the JTF-S OPORD tasked the brigade to form the Joint Civil Affairs Task Force (JCATF) under JTF-S control. Several precious days passed while JTF-S and SOUTHCOM sorted out command and control relationships. Another friction point involved the handover of Civil-Military Operations (CMO) responsibilities following the execution of a combat plan. A key planning assumption by the USARSO staff was that JTF-S units would initially be responsible for emergency service restoration as well as law and order in order to give

¹⁰³ Schultz, 27.

¹⁰⁴ Fishel, 13. BLIND LOGIC, the precursor to PROMOTE LIBERTY, accounted for multiple conditions requiring US assistance in Panama. Not only was it designed to be executed independently, concurrently, or in immediately following combat operations, it was also designed to account for different levels of damage to the Panamanian infrastructure. Finally, it also accounted for variations in available U.S. forces.

the follow-on organizations time to deploy, form, and gain situational understanding.

Unfortunately, the JTF-S planners essentially intended to immediately give all post-combat activities to the Civil Military Operations Task Force (CMOTF) under United States Army South (USARSO) control.¹⁰⁵

As mentioned above, both SOUTHCOM and JTF-S anticipated a “transition” period, but each organization believed the other was responsible for execution. Since JTF-S focused on combat operations, it did not appreciate and prepare for the rapid transition to post-combat operations at the tactical level. Many combat units had to police cities with little experience, expertise, or guidance. During the first week after the invasion, SOUTHCOM worked diligently to restore services, establish a functioning government, and coordinate the efforts of relief agencies while JTF-S tried to establish security in the country. Since a Presidential call-up for the reserve forces outlined in the original plan was not enacted, Civil Affairs (CA) officers only trickled into country, and even then for only a very limited period. SOUTHCOM worked to put a force structure in place with enough expertise to be effective, and this force, which eventually became the Military Support Group-Panama.

CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING TRANSITIONS TO POST-COMBAT PHASE

As the previous discussion shows, SOUTHCOM struggled with the transition to post-combat operations. From the beginning of the invasion until the establishment of the Military Support Group - Panama on 17 January, SOUTHCOM used a series of ad hoc solutions to deal with the post-conflict situation in Panama. While these solutions succeeded in restoring limited government services quickly, the problems with looting throughout Panama City, Colon, and other parts of the country reduced U.S. momentum and created a perception that the US did not adequately plan the post-combat phase.¹⁰⁶ Significantly, these difficulties occurred in a country

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 21.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 31.

where the U.S. had extensive experience and the population overwhelmingly supported U.S. efforts.

This transition also highlighted some of the differences between various types of transitions, and some of the unique challenges associated with post-combat transitions. First, it demonstrated that initiative, in terms of setting the terms of action, in a post-combat setting involves both the security and reconstruction efforts within a country. Therefore, quickly integrating outside agencies in this effort is fundamental to success. Second, planning must account for the fact that post-combat operations often occur simultaneously with combat operations. The following observations about the transition to post-combat operations in Panama generally follow the transition framework.

First, SOUTHCOM did not have a clear concept of what it wanted to do in the post-combat phase. SOUTHCOM did not dedicate sufficient resources in terms of people and organizations to properly plan, prepare, and execute the post-combat plan. Furthermore, the doctrine to support post-combat planning was insufficient. This lack of a conceptual framework resulted in staffs and assets not being focused correctly. While planners for Operation Just Cause had doctrinal constructs to guide their thinking and planning, no such body of doctrine existed for the post-combat operations planning. Second, conditions are useful, but only if they are proactive in nature and tied to decisions. In addition, units must dedicate sufficient assets to understanding when conditions are met.

Third, units must integrate combat and post-combat plans to delineate roles and responsibilities as well as ensure the appropriate capabilities are in place to immediately dominate the situation. Having SOUTHCOM plan the post-combat phase then attempt a “handover” of the plan to JTF-S at time of execution led to confusion in terms of roles, responsibilities, and assets. As a result, SOUTHCOM and JTF-S had to pause in order to reorient assets and gain situational awareness to begin post-combat tasks.

Finally, combat units must have the capability and a plan to conduct post-combat operations. The simultaneous nature of post-combat operations means that combat units cannot leave post-combat operations to “someone else.” The hours immediately following cessation of hostilities are extremely important in maintaining the initiative. By preventing actions such as looting and quickly beginning other stability and support tasks, units reduce the inherent chaos and destruction surrounding the termination of a conflict and potentially gain the support of the population.

The synthesis of the conclusions from each of these historical case studies shed light on the difficulties encountered during transitions and potential solutions. Furthermore, the case studies highlight the similarities and differences of various transitions and the applicability of the transition framework. Finally, the case studies illustrate the impact of military culture on transitions.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

The opening chapter began by highlighting the problems that U.S. forces, and the Army in particular, have transitioning to post-combat operations. It also highlighted the importance of transitions and offered a two-step strategy for exploring the problems and potential solutions associated with transitions. The first step involved developing a conceptual framework to examine transitions while the second step applied the conceptual model to two historical case studies. The resulting synthesis provides key insights into the nature of transitions, the capabilities and shortcomings of the conceptual model, the impact of military culture on transitions, the necessity of post-combat doctrine, and problems encountered in transitions and their potential solutions.

The historical case studies confirmed that all transitions are difficult and occur in highly complex environments. The case studies also highlighted some of the key differences between transitions that occur during combat operations versus transitions to post-combat operations. First, unlike transitions that occur earlier in a campaign, the transition to the post-combat environment involves many other organizations outside the Department of Defense. Their involvement is essential for success, but greatly complicates the transition process. Unlike military units, these organizations do not have a common framework (i.e. doctrine) to guide their actions nor do they work in unison to reach a common objective. The transition to post-combat operations generally involves a shift away from the military as the primary instrument of national power, which leads to the second point. The transition to the post-combat environment involves a dramatic shift in mindset. The entire mentality of the force must move from a mindset that is generally destructive in nature to one that is constructive. Forces that were previously focused on destruction of an opponent must quickly shift mindset (and rules of engagement) and conduct joint checkpoints, etc. This reality is further complicated by the uncertainty often surrounding conflict termination. Third, the “enemy” often changes and becomes more nebulous in the post-

combat phase. Instead of a well-defined enemy that has a known order of battle that can be targeted with conventional intelligence assets, the enemy in the post-conflict environment is often chaos itself, organized crime, looting, etc. As a result, units must change their mindset and techniques in order to retain the initiative. Finally, the cumulative effect of friction begins to affect unit performance. Transitions that occur earlier in a campaign benefit from the simple fact that they are closer to the “start conditions.” Even with detailed post-conflict planning, it is extremely difficult to anticipate the actual conditions surrounding conflict termination due to the uncertainty of the battlefield and the cumulative effects of friction.

In terms of a conceptual model for transitions, the framework used throughout this work - understanding the present state, understanding the future state, understanding the conditions, and managing the transition state – contains two particular strengths. First, it provides a general model for transitions that highlights the similarities between all types of transitions. This underscores the idea that all effective transitions, regardless of when they occur in a campaign, follow the same general principles. Recent difficulties in post-combat transitions result from a failure to follow these ideas. Second, it stresses the systems nature of transitions and highlights the futility of attributing ineffective transitions to a single cause or attempting to fix problems using a single solution.

The historical case studies illustrate the impact of military culture on post-combat transitions. As mentioned before, both General Thurman and LTG Stiner acknowledged the fact that they focused almost exclusively on combat operations at the expense of the post-conflict transition. If commanders and units believe that their *raison d’être* lies exclusively in the realm of combat operations, they will fail to dedicate sufficient effort to the transition from combat to post-combat operations. The result is a loss of operational and strategic momentum that potentially leads to a prolonged post-combat phase. Based on the recent example of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, this mentality still dominates military thinking despite doctrine’s emphasis on achieving the desired end state.

The historical case studies also illustrate the important role of doctrine, and indicate that U.S. forces will continue to have difficulty transitioning to post-combat operations as long as there is not a valid doctrinal framework for post-combat operations to anchor planning. Doctrine must go beyond the current construct of stressing the importance of post-combat operations and transitions; it must provide a valid framework to guide planning.¹⁰⁷ This includes operations that immediately follow combat as well as integration of these operations into the overall concept of prosecuting a campaign. This has particular relevance in the current environment where U.S. forces possess the capability to defeat enemy forces with unparalleled rapidity. Doctrine must achieve the proper balance in order to facilitate achieving the overall objectives for the nation.

The case studies emphasize one key concept – effective transitions result from having the right capability in the right place at the right time that can immediately dominate the situation. Situational understanding plays a central role in dominating the situation. Consequently, the longer it takes a force to reorient assets and gain situational understanding the more difficult the transition. Comparing the results from the case studies offers several ways to mitigate these challenges during the transition to post-combat operations.

First, commanders must adequately resource the planning and preparation efforts for the post-change state in order for the transition to the post-change state to go well. In other words, operational level commands must resist the temptation to focus exclusively on the present, or pre-change state. The operational level headquarters cannot abdicate its responsibility for planning the future phase, and it must be willing to allocate sufficient resources in terms of organizations and equipment to properly plan and prepare for the future phase despite the more pressing

¹⁰⁷ Potential frameworks for use include Conrad Crane and Andrew Terrill's *Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario*. February 2003. Internet, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pubs/2203/reconirq/reconirq.htm>.

demands of the current phase. This maintains momentum by ensuring that the organization is prepared to immediately execute the future phase when needed.

While the specific organizational solutions depend on the situation, the case studies show that a robust organization, in terms of both headquarters and actual forces, must plan and execute the transition. It must be capable of identifying key decision points associated with execution of the phase, identifying the corresponding intelligence requirements for those decisions, and have the capability to collect the necessary intelligence. In the case of Operation DESERT STORM, Third Army possessed sufficient assets, resources, and expertise to plan and prepare for the ground war. This included Third Army developing its own intelligence requirements and focusing intelligence assets on those requirements in order to have immediate situational understanding when the ground offensive began. As a result, CENTCOM did not have to pause when it was time to transition to the ground war while Third Army gained situational understanding. Following these ideas reduce delays caused by a force having to pause in order to reorient assets and gain situational awareness when transitioning to a new phase.

Second, the post-change state planning must be thoroughly integrated with pre-change state planning. This prevents gaps in capability and reduces confusion in command relationships and missions. Identifying the conditions associated with a transition serve as an effective integrating mechanism as well. These conditions should be explicitly identified, and they should focus on friendly forces as well as enemy forces. The higher-level headquarters is vital to this process. In Operation DESERT STORM, CENTCOM planners articulated particular conditions for the transition from one phase to the next, incorporated those in the plan, and tracked their status.

Third, the appropriate forces for the post-change phase, in terms of capabilities and size, must be in place to immediately begin operations in order to reduce the time and impact of the transition period. The specific solution depends on the situation, but it must be addressed in the planning. In order to reduce the length of the transition period, plans must account for the time

needed to identify conditions, the time needed to make decisions, and the time needed to mobilize, train, deploy, or reorganize the force.¹⁰⁸ In Operation DESERT STORM, the ground forces were trained and ready to execute when the ground offensive began. In Operation JUST CAUSE/PROMOTE LIBERTY, many essential capabilities for the post-combat phase were not in place to immediately impact the situation

Finally, as this study shows, transitions play an important role in maintaining operational and strategic momentum. Why does the Army seem to struggle with the transition to post-combat operations? The answer appears to be multi-faceted. The easy answer is that ineffective transitions result from an organization failing to understand the present, understand the future, understand the conditions surrounding the transition, or effectively manage the transition period. The more difficult answers relate to why these failures happen and how to fix them. Doctrine and culture offer two potential solutions, but both will take time to change. In the meantime, professional discussion needs to focus on this “dynamic yet unique state of affairs” in order to help commanders and planners better balance the needs of the future with the pressing demands of today.

¹⁰⁸ Hans Binnendijk and Stuart Johnson, ed. Transforming for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations offers an in-depth analysis of establishing a force with the responsibility to “fill the gap” between combat operations and the nation-building effort.

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